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*Language and Christology: the Case of Henry of
Gorkum († 1431), Thomist*

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The first of commentators of Thomas Aquinas did come from the Netherlands. Master Henry of Gorkum, a small town in the Netherlands between Utrecht and Rotterdam, accomplished his studies in Paris, and made a considerable career in Cologne. Henry transposed what he took to be the central theological insights of Thomas into a literary form that was fit for educating students. What are these insights? In summarizing the *Summa Theologiae* and in writing a tract called *De divinis nominibus*, how did Henry introduce his students to the work of what he deemed the most important theologian since Augustine? This contribution offers an answer to these questions, and it proposes a number of insights of Henry because of which it is still worthwhile in our days to study his writings.

First we will dwell a bit on the importance of names and naming for Aquinas. Next we will introduce Henry of Gorkum. Sections 3-5 are devoted to the study of Henry's interpretation of Aquinas, mostly on the basis of his *De divinis nominibus*.² In concluding we will summarize our findings.

1. *Aquinas on naming the divine*

"And I shall give them in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than sons and daughters; I shall give them an everlasting name that will never be effaced", says the Lord (Isa 56.5). This prophecy occasions Thomas Aquinas to briefly outline a possible sermon (*collatio* it is called by some³) on the names of the faithful and the Name itself. Aquinas' notes are divided on two subjects: the names of the faithful, and

the love for the Name of God. The faithful receive their name from predestination: "The Lord called me when I was in the womb, before my birth he had pronounced my name" (Isa 49,1). They are called children of God since God has adopted them: "You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children - which is what we are!" (1Jo 3,1). The name is given by grace: "You have a name and hold firmly to my name" (cf. Rev 2,13), and is a token of the renewal of the mind: to those "I will give a white stone, with a new name written on it" (Rev 2,17). The shorthand that Aquinas here employs, leaves ample space for interpretation. Names constitute one's identity, an identity in this case dominated by primordial calling that corresponds to eschatological destination, revolving around adoption and grace. Such is the identity of the faithful, which ranges from 'beginning' to 'end', and lives from Christ's work of salvation. Their spiritual life of being called upon, expresses itself in love for the Name; the Name that includes Christ the Saviour: the Name is great and arouses fear, as the Lord says that "My Name is great among the nations" (Mal 1,11). The Name is holy and incites veneration: "He has done great things for me, holy is his name" (Lk 1,49). The Name is delightful and calls for meditation: "Thy Name and thy memory is what my soul longs for" (Isa 26,13, *Nomen tuum et memoriale tuum in desiderio animae*). The Name is abundant in compassion: "Thy Name is an oil poured out" (Sg 1,2, *Oleum effusum nomen tuum*). The Name is powerful to invoke: "the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name" (Jn 15, 16). The Name is uniquely capable of salvation: "There is no other name under heaven in which we can be saved" (Acts 4,12). Lastly the Name is hidden for knowledge: "What is his Name, and what is the name of his Son, do you know?" (Pr 30,4).

These seven aspects of the Name are telling. First of all because the Name includes Jesus Christ. Aquinas makes no distinction here between names of God and names of Christ. On the contrary, he comes close to saying that 'Jesus' is the name of God, quoting from Peter's homily in

Acts. The fact that the aspects are seven will not be coincidental: the names of God and Christ are innumerable, and the reason for this is intimated by the last one mentioned: the hiddenness of the name of God and the name of the Son. Most divine names, Scriptural as they are, are taken from creaturely perfections, all of which preexist in God in an eminent way; no creaturely representation, be it real or be it mental in those who attempt to understand, will be adequate. For this, Scripture takes its refuge to a plurality, a multitude of names, of translations of the Name.

These few words, written by a still youthful Thomas Aquinas, probably in Cologne, may come as a surprise to some, who are not accustomed to the more spiritual aspect of Aquinas' work. In fact, I would like to defend, and have done so elsewhere⁴, that the theological attitude that this little scheme betrays, is fundamental for Aquinas. Aquinas' theological authorship is characterized by a profound interest in language and naming the divine; the naming of Christ is an essential part of this interest, which is animated by Aquinas' permanent drive to both show and respect God's hiddenness in Christ, to such an extent that his christology may be called 'negative'. Some have welcomed this interpretation, whereas others have expressed doubts⁵: would Aquinas have recognized it? We don't know, but what we are about to learn is what the first commentator of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, living in Cologne as well, some 170 years later thought of it. It will turn out that the oldest of commentators considers the topic of the divine names to be in the heart of Aquinas' theological authorship, entailing two other highly relevant insights. The first insight concerns the relationship between the *sermo de Deo* and the *sermo de Christo*, the second Aquinas' 'negative' approach in both respects.

3. *A few biographical notes on Henry of Gorkum*

Henry must have been born in 1377 or 1378 in Gorkum (Gorinchem), at

the time belonging to the Utrecht diocese. The exact date is unknown and postulated by Weiler, because of his licentiate in the arts in Paris, dated on 1398. Henry was to study the arts, consequently act as *Magister artium* between 1398 and 1402, and to be a student of theology. There are no records left of a Parisian licentiate in theology, but he must have obtained one, since he was able to receive licentiate and doctorate in Cologne only shortly after his moving there in 1419. In 1410 he had resumed teaching the arts in Paris, but he left the city, which was in turmoil due to wars, famine and the plague, for a relatively quiet Cologne. Being a secular priest, Henry served as parish priest there, and being a well-respected scholar, he was professor in theology at the university. Next to this, Henry was famous for founding a gymnasium, a *bursa*, for young students, to provide for a good preparation for enrolling in the arts, and at the same time to provide for an opportunity to further the cause of a renewed Thomism. For that was the cause with which Henry came from Paris, since 1407 dedicated once more to realism instead of nominalism, to Cologne, where the original nominalism from the early beginnings of the university had not survived either. The conflicts concerning the *via antiqua* and the *via modernorum* seem to be first and foremost conflicts concerning the way in which learning should be organized: by studying and explaining the works of Aristotle or by a new method that is less concerned with commenting authoritative texts and more with a *modus quaestionis* and a terminist treatment of logical issues: study of the *parva logicalia* (in Cologne: supposition, ampliation, appellation, obligations, insolubles and consequences) and analysis of scientific demonstration. Cologne in fact had found a compromise, but the *via antiqua* was dominant. Attempting to avoid the condemned theological consequences of nominalism, and possibly faithful to the views of the Parisian chancellor Jean Gerson, Henry put himself to providing education with a large number of writings the paramount purpose of which must have been didactic in nature: logical works, philosophical works and most of all theological works. Among the latter a *Lectura super Evangelium*, a

compendium of the *Summa Theologiae* entitled *Quaestiones in S. Thomam, Conclusiones super IV Libros Sententiarum*, an adaptation of the *Supplementum IIIae Partis Summae Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, a number of treatises among which treatises on the divine names, predestination and the eucharist, and a treatise against the Hussites. In historical respect it is rather important that Grabman and Weiler credit Henry to be the first commentator of the *Summa Theologiae*, to be the first to put Aquinas in a central place in his teaching, about a century before Paris would do so and cause Spanish Thomism to flourish.⁶ The *thomistarum coloniensem monarcha*, as he was called by one of his students, seems to have been well-respected, a scholar with a clear mind, engaged in putting before his students the essentials of philosophical and theological learning, without undue sophistry, idle speculation or craving for polemics; an irenic and practical man, always willing to solve problems or intervene in academic or political matters; moreover someone who never sought originality or personal prestige. This we will shortly encounter.

2. The prologues of Henry's *De Divinis Nominibus*

The Name of God is delightful and calls for meditation, Aquinas said. He corroborates this point by quoting a passage from Isaiah 26 that is rather classic in works or questions that deal with the subject of naming the divine: "*Nomen tuum et memoriale tuum in desiderio anime*": "Thy Name and thy memory is what my soul longs for". It is this very quotation that is chosen by Henry of Gorkum to act as the thread of his exposition of the divine names. In the general prologue he adds that it is the sweetness of the divine love, consuming his inner self, which causes the prophet to 'throw up' this word. Interiority and exteriority is one of the classical themes Henry touches upon, in quoting Isaiah and alluding to the Aristotelian conception that exterior words express the interior concept flowing forth from an understanding of the external 'thing' to be

understood. The soul, acting in this way, is in a certain sense everything, Aristotle is quoted saying (*De Anima* III). Therefore, Henry says, whenever the soul forms a name of God in the hiddenness of the mind, it gives room to God himself. For this reason each devout person will say: Thy name and thy memory is what my soul longs for (f 1r).

However, all names, exterior as well as interior, are deficient, since God is ever greater than all human knowledge of him, which is corroborated by evidence from Aristotle and the Book of Causes. Both divine excellence and weakness of human understanding cause the inadequacy and the plurality of divine names. For novices in theology and others to speak more easily and confidently about God without fault, Henry collects insights concerning the divine names in a handbook of study. He says so having quoted Jerome from Aquinas' works: "since from words spoken disorderly heresy flows forth", adding "therefore, whenever we speak of the divine, we should act cautiously and modestly".⁷

Henry's concern is with his students, and in line of this with the public character of theology, of speech about God. The exteriority of spoken words about God is not to be reduced to the interiority of prayer, even though the former bespeaks the latter, but has a value of its own. For one thing, because it may give rise to error and doubt. It is also quite clear that *de divinis nominibus* is best interpreted as concerning not only divine names, but all speech about God. The context in Aquinas from which Henry quotes Jerome, is about Arianism and Sabellianism, where Aquinas proposes avoiding speaking about e.g. diversity and difference in matters Trinitarian, lest one comes too close to Arianism. The contents of Henry's treatise confirms this interpretation of *nomina* as well. It is subdivided in three parts, the first of which covers the contents of *ST* I, 13 (*de nominibus Dei*), the second the theology of the Trinity, and the third the theology of Christ. Henry intends to proceed by propositions formulated on the basis of authentic sayings and rules, subjoining their causes and expositions. The first part "*qualiter lingua theologica debeat*

enunciare de divinis nomina ad unitatem essentie seu divine nature pertinentia" (f. 5r) consists of 10 propositions, the second "*de nominibus quibus utimur loquentes de his quae concernunt distinctionem ad intra in divinis*" (f. 5r) 16 propositions, and the third "*nomina quibus utimur loquentes de deo ratione nature assumpte*" (f. 13r) 13 propositions. The rules that Henry mentions are most interesting. Some of them will be examined later on, but in general one has to concede that their formulation stems from a practice of teaching in which a certain kind of theology has become dominant and is translated for the needs of students: the theology of Thomas Aquinas. To this we will return shortly.

The same spirit that animated the general prologue is to be recognized in the prologues to the second and third part of the treatise. The prologue to the second part once again quotes from Isa 26, but now a distinction is made which is famous for the controversy it bred: the distinction between natural knowledge of God, and inspired knowledge.⁸ Thus, Aquinas' primary distinction between "things pertaining to the divine essence" (*ST I*, qq. 2-26) and "things pertaining to the distinguished persons" (qq. 27-43), which is an objective distinction, is interpreted against the background of the content of q. 32 on the (human) knowledge of the divine persons. Here Aquinas distinguishes between that which can be known on the basis of natural reason (*ratio naturalis*) and that which is known only by faith and 'proven' only by adducing *auctoritates*. Knowledge of God based on knowledge of creatures, cannot attain knowledge of the distinction between the divine persons, since the divine persons have the power of creation in common. The combination of theo-logical, literally taken, and epistemological considerations that Henry undertakes, is clearly one step further than what Aquinas intended, and prepares for the eventual distinction of two separate treatises *de Deo uno* and *de Deo trino* in neo-thomist manuals of theology.⁹

With a touch of poetry Henry continues the prologue in likening the trinitarian divine names to drops of water that enable one to perceive

the divine torrent of sweetness. For this reason no one will regret having spent some time studying the names that the Holy Fathers employed when dealing with the three persons of the Holy Trinity. And therefore some propositions are given for this longing of this soul. Notice the order that Henry describes: the propositions are formulated in order to facilitate the study of the divine names, which in their turn make God's overflowing sweetness approachable, thus serving the longing of each human soul.

The largest of prologues, finally, is the one to introduce the third and last *distinctio* concerning the names that we employ when speaking about God *ratione naturae assumpte*, i.e. Christ Incarnate. Needless to say, once again the quotation from Isaiah 26 is prominent; this time it is quoted as many as five times. Without any hesitation Henry equates the name of God with the name of Christ he deems most fundamental: Jesus. Once again, as he did in the first prologue when selecting a topic concerning language *in divinis* from somewhere in the middle of the treatise on the divine persons, he dives into the middle of Aquinas' *sermo de Deo Salvatore* (ST III pr.), i.e. question 37,2: *Utrum convenienter fuerit Christo nomen impositum*, to come to the fore with a number of insights regarding the name Jesus. The procedure to abbreviate Aquinas Henry chooses is interesting: first he quotes the biblical authority from the argument *sed contra* (imposition of the name Jesus), second he mentions the Aristotelian axiom with which Aquinas opens his determination, without, however, quoting Aristotle in full. Next he skips the part in which Aquinas shows how in ordinary naming of proper names those names some way or other are taken from a property of the one named (f.i. the child receives the name of the saint on whose feast day it was born, or from its father, or from an event or a certain quality), and addresses directly those names that are imposed by God. Those names always signify a divine gift bestowed upon the one named: Abraham, Peter. Such is the case with Jesus as well, since Christ human was gifted with the office of grace to save all human beings.¹⁰ Independently from

Aquinas Henry continues by adducing sayings from Anselm, Augustine (?), Ambrose and Bernard of Clairvaux. Ambrose excepted, these sayings are prayers addressed to Christ the Saviour, which fits in neatly with the quotation from Isaiah. Anselm and Augustine confess the predominance of the name Saviour, Jesus, among the names of Christ. Ambrose lists a number of names of Christ that all pertain to his salvific work: *medicus, fons, virtus, vita, lux, alimentum*. Bernard glorifies Christ as the source of sources of all virtue and knowledge, naming Christ's work with many different names. But all the names that are attributed to Christ, and now Henry returns to *ST III*, 37,2 (ad 1), in some way signify the name Jesus, f.i. Emmanuel signifies the cause of salvation, i.e. the union of divine and human nature in the person of the Son by which He has become God with us.¹¹ The eucharistic names of Christ are explicitly mentioned, and finally Henry concludes by quoting the letter to the Philippians (2,10): in the name of Jesus every knee will bend etc. What our soul longs for is thus especially the name of its saviour, of Jesus, this name that the Song of Songs (1,2) calls "an oil poured out".

The prologue is not ended, however, since Henry once again, as at the end of the prologue to the second distinction, gives an indication for the right interpretation of what he is up to. Addressing Jesus the Saviour directly, he states that the incarnation has brought us many names and a philosophy which is worthy of admiration and unheard of by philosophers of old. It is for the benefit of the study of those names, that in this third part of the work propositions are formulated which deal with the art of enunciating faithfully the language of the incarnation.¹²

From the contents of these prologues it may confidently be concluded that the christological part of this treatise on naming the divine constitutes its climax. In this respect Henry shows himself to be a faithful student of Aquinas, whom he never bothers to mention, but silently quotes. According to Henry there is an evident linkage between Aquinas' treatise on divine names, on the divine persons and on God the saviour,

since all of them revolve around language *in divinis*: its inadequacy, its truth, its rules and its spirituality.

4. Henry's interpretation of *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 13

It takes some effort to discover the principles for Henry's organisation of the material of I, 13, Aquinas' major treatment of naming the divine in general. At first sight it looks like he has thrown it all in the air and has represented it in the way it had come down. But appearances deceive. Henry's didactic purpose has appreciated the students' predilection for concrete names. Therefore he starts out, in the first three propositions (2, 3, and 4) with three, in fact five, different kinds of names:

- a) stone, rock, lion, lamb, grapevine, and the like
- b) lord, creator, cause, saviour, and the like
(knowledge, foreknowledge, predestination, providence and the like)
- c) to be, to live, to know, to understand; to be good, wise, just, true, free; to be active, to be immaterial, and the like
(to be eternal, to be independent, to be omnipotent, to be pure act, to be first cause, and the like)

The first are identified as metaphors and temporal names which are predicated improperly of God, the second signify relations *ex tempore* (or *ab aeterno*) but are said truly and properly, whereas the third and most important type of names are considered to be the divine attributes, which Anselm called *predicata perfectionalia* (different from names said *cum excessu perfectionis*, as to be eternal etc.).

The next three propositions (5, 6, 7) consider different aspects from what Henry calls the divine attributes: they signify God substantially but imperfectly and analogously, they are not synonyms even though they stand for God's simplicity, and their multiplicity is not only due to the naming subject but has a ground in the one named even though the one named is one.¹³ The following propositions (8, 9) are once again devoted

to particular names:

- d) God, He who is
- e) light (*lux, lumen*), splendor, and the like

And the last proposition (10) sums up a number of rules for speech. Henry's principle of organisation can thus be detected: different kinds of particular divine names. To the material of q. 13 he silently adds (prop. 9) a category that Aquinas only later in the *Prima Pars* (67.1) discusses: names that fit God metaphorically but, due to extended signification, nevertheless properly (light, splendor).

In the course of his commentary (o.c. pp. 141-145), Weiler is able to identify material from all of the first eleven articles of question 13. He fails to mention article 12 that apart from some rather vague remarks in proposition 10, seems to be missing. The reason for this is simple, but telling. Article 12 concerns the question whether affirmative propositions may be formed about God. Aquinas' main tool in composing an affirmative answer, is the distinction between signification *secundum rem*, and signification *secundum rationem*, i.e. between supposition (denotation) and signification (connotation). Whether we say *homo est albus* (accidental predication), or *homo est animal* (substantial predication), or *homo est homo* (identical predication), in all cases a real identity is affirmed between that which is denoted by the subject-term, and connoted by the predicate-term. The fact that the proposition is composed of several terms is due to our mode of understanding and signification, but does not *eo ipso* imply a real composition in the subject about which the proposition is formed. Therefore no violation of God's simplicity is committed. In the course of his determination Aquinas employs the rule that predicate-terms are to be interpreted formally, and subject-terms materially. This is the same distinction between signification and supposition formulated in different words: predicates signify or connote the form, whereas subject-terms supposit or stand for (denote) the existing thing. The distinction between supposition and signification can be omitted by Henry in his first part, since it is the basic

insight underlying all analysis of christological language. In other words, economically as he must be in this short treatise, Henry must have thought: I will shortly come to those matters when discussing christological language. And indeed, he does so. For *in christologicis* a clear distinction between supposit or person and natures, between the interpretation of the subject-term and the predicate-term, between supposition and signification is fundamental. For this reason, Henry selects Aquinas' questions on whether Christ is a *compositum*, on the *communicatio idiomatum*, and on the being of Christ. We will resume this subject in our next section.

There is yet another instance which shows the grounds why Henry associates the contents of q. 13 with the *sermo de Christo*. At the end of his commentary on the third proposition (f. 2r), concerning proper temporal relational names, he mentions two examples from christological language. Both of them can be found in Aquinas as well, but in the *Tertia Pars*. Having explained the mixed relations that exist between God and creation, Henry applies this to the name 'Son of Mary' of Christ (there is no real relation to his mother in the Son, but Christ is nevertheless really the son of Mary), and to the hypostatic union in general (the Word begins to be human, is really human, without any alteration on Its part).¹⁴ Since the hypostatic union implies a relation between the Word of God and human nature, the names for Christ imply this relation. Such a relation can be of no other kind than the relation which is implied by other relational names, such as Creator or Lord. Therefore names for Christ incarnate imply a relation which is on the side of the divine a *relatio rationis tantum*, and on the side of the created human nature a *relatio realis*: a mixed relation.¹⁵

From this we may conclude that Henry is well aware of the christological relevance of the general treatise of the divine names: in respect of the distinction between supposition and signification as well as in respect of the classification of names for Christ incarnate among the relational temporal names.

The last aspect of the first *distinctio* that I would like to draw attention to, is its persistent stress on the inadequacy of the human modes of signification and God's supereminence. In general we already encountered this in the first prologue to *De divinis nominibus*. But now Henry is able to specify the ways in which existent language fails to represent God as He is. Metaphorical names include imperfection in their very meaning, such as materiality and temporality (prop. 2). Some names signify an excess of perfection itself, such as to be eternal or to be omnipotent, implying that there is also an incomprehensible excess of meaning (prop. 4). Other names, the attributes, are to be interpreted as implying such an incomprehensible excess of meaning, since they signify creaturely perfections that God possesses in an eminent way, and are said of God not univocally or equivocally but analogously (prop. 5). Moreover, God cannot be thought to actually possess the attributes signified by the corresponding names, since God is absolutely simple; but our mode of understanding and our mode of signification is built on composite being, and therefore in its structure fails to represent the divine as it is (prop. 6). At the end of the first *distinctio* Henry formulates four rules, that he alternately calls *regula*, *documentum*, and *canon*, all of which are pertinent in this respect. (1) To be distinguished are that from which a name is derived, and that to which a name is imposed. Divine names are derived from perfections that proceed from God, which imperfectly represent Him, but they do not purport to signify that process (God is living, meaning: from God proceeds life), but God inasmuch the perfections preexist in an eminent way in Him. This rule functions in several places in Aquinas' treatise: to reject one opinion on how divine names would not signify God substantially (Alain de Lille, cf. 13.2 c.), to distinguish several meanings of *Deus*, and to locate the priority of analogical names in their application to the divine over their deduction from or imposition to creatures (a.o. 13. 6). (2) Human knowledge and naming of the divine is derived from knowledge and naming of material creatures. Material creatures are composed; in none

of them form and subsistence are identical, as in God. Therefore we use both concrete (signifying substance) and abstract (signifying form, simplicity) nouns in naming the divine (cf. 13.1 ad 2). (3) Imperfection inheres all names that we employ to name the divine. They are, as Gregory says, stammering resonances of divine perfections.¹⁶ Material creatures from which we derive knowledge and names of the divine are very deficient representations of the divine, unable as they are to represent the divine perfection as it is in itself, and human modes of understanding are imperfect, since they cannot understand but through looking into phantasms. Nevertheless, propositions about God, such as God is wisdom and God is wise, are regarded to be true, even though their modes of signification are unfit for the divine, implying accidentality and having properties (cf. 13.1 ad 3; 13.12). (4) Finally Henry mentions the threefold way of knowing and naming God as laid out by Pseudo-Dionysius: the *via causalitatis*, the *via eminentiae*, and the *via remotionis*.¹⁷ The latter, the way of removal, removes from God, Henry says, all imperfection that human knowing or naming, apt as it primarily is for created reality, implies. Therefore God is said to be pure act, incorporeal, immaterial, simple, indivisible, etc. (f. 5r)

5. Henry's interpretation of *Summa Theologiae* III

As we have seen above, Henry takes his vantage point considering the *sermo de Christo* not from the beginning of the *Tertia Pars*, but from q. 37: the name Jesus. His prologue to the *tertia distinctio* explains how meaningful and fundamental this name is, signifying Christ's salvific presence. For a moment, possible disengagement of his scholasticism gives way to the proper context of naming the divine, the context of prayer.

In the course of his treatment of christological language, Henry unfolds thirteen propositions, in all respects according to the order of the *Tertia Pars*.¹⁸ The first proposition could be translated as: "A sound

foreknowledge of the mode of union of the Word Incarnate is the most favourable proem for rightly speaking about the divine incarnation".¹⁹ Nothing could better hit the heart of the matter. The twofold stress on the fact that knowledge of the mode of the union precedes the rest is telling. Henry considers questions 2-15 as presuppositions for christological language. For that is the part which Aquinas subsumes under "*de modo unionis Verbi Incarnati*" (III 2 pr.). Questions 16-26 are "*de his quae consequuntur unionem*" (III 16 pr.), and one expects Henry to count these as belonging to the "favourable proem" as well. As a result one has to notice that all propositions Henry formulates belong to this area.²⁰ Consequently, everything that follows has to be regarded as a prolegomenon, a proem to actual christological language. This is quite important to note, since otherwise one might be tempted to discard this kind of reflection on account of its lack of historical or soteriological interest: it does not intend to do that job nor suggest that it should not be done at all, it just considers it fruitful to formulate a proem so that the conditions of possibility of "*loquendi recte de divina incarnatione*" will be fulfilled. How important that is for Henry is the subject of the first lines, where he says that from such knowledge all ability depends to discern between language fitting or unfitting for the mystery of the incarnation.²¹ One should note the use of *sermones convenientes et disconvenientes*. Henry ends his treatment, saying that a smart reader will be able, on the basis of this material, to judge which christological language to prefer.²² At the end of the third prologue he talked about propositions "containing the art of enunciating faithfully the language (*sermo*) emerging because of the incarnation".²³ Well now, the expression *sermones* must be taken literally. Henry is engaged in explaining and interpreting the very wording of fundamental sound propositions concerning Christ.²⁴ In the first proposition it is explained how the mode of the union should be understood, and the other propositions indicate what kind of words and propositions fit that mode. Would the mode be otherwise, other locutions would be needed.²⁵ 'Union' and 'assumption', and their

different forms, are key words in christology, but they possess a highly different semantics. What can be said with the one, cannot be said with the other and vice versa. For instance, the one who unites can be said to be the one united, whereas the one who assumes cannot be said to be the one assumed; it can truly be said that human nature is united to divine nature or that divine nature is united to human nature, but to say that divine nature is assumed by human nature is not correct. Thus a number of semantic differences are brought to the fore, entailing a different Truth/False analysis of certain propositions. Such is Henry's linguistic interpretation of *ST* III, 3, contained in his second proposition. Easy to be done, he says, for someone who has the right conception of the mode of the hypostatic union. The same linguistic reading is undertaken concerning the subject of *ST* III, 4 on 'that which is assumed' in the hypostatic union. In proposition 4 he does so by analyzing the terms 'person', 'human being', 'carnal body' and 'soul' when employed in the expression '*Filius Dei assumpsit ...*'. Propositions 4 - 12 all regard the truth or falsehood of a large number of exon Christ pressions. Propositions 4 and 5 do so rather implicitly, but at the end of his treatment of 5 Henry says that on the basis of a sound knowledge of the hypostatic union it will not be difficult to understand and formulate enunciations about Christ which are rather unusual for other human beings.²⁶ This time his students themselves must apply the principles to language. The next propositions, however, are all devoted to certain expressions, the most important of which is proposition 6, Henry's interpretation of *ST* III, 16: If one applies to the holy incarnate union some rules that are common in the sciences, it will be easy to speak justly in the communication of property-terms, the proposition says.²⁷ In the course of his treatment, Henry identifies six rules of a semantic nature, the application of which facilitates the analysis of propositions about Christ. The first two of these are most important, since they lay out the principles of supposition and signification. They are literally taken from *ST* III, 16, 1. The first concerns the logical status of the subject-term [e.g. *this tree* is x], and the second of

the predicate-term [e.g. *x is a tree*]. The first could be paraphrased as: 'Every concrete name with connotation, can denote something which belongs to the class connoted'.²⁸ The second as: 'Of everything that belongs to a certain nature a predicate-term may truly and properly be said which concretely connotes that nature'.²⁹ The distinction of these two main modes of signification already animated the very reflection on the mode of the union, since there a distinction was made between supposit or person, the object of supposition, and natures, the object of signification. But now the linguistic reading is developed in full, interpreting "*Deus est homo*" and "*Homo est Deus*". On grounds of the second rule mentioned, the predicate-term *homo* can truthfully be said of *Deus*, since the predicate-term connotes a nature by which the supposit of *Deus* exists, even though *Deus* does not signify or connote that (human) nature.³⁰ The truth of *Homo est Deus* depends on both rules: the subject-term is taken to stand for the supposit of both human and divine nature, the latter of which is signified by the predicate-term. Thus the constitution of the linguistic rule of the *communicatio idiomatum* is laid out. For it is on the basis of the truth of both propositions mentioned, together with the rules of supposition and signification, that it can be said that (the Son of) God was passible, was mortal and is temporal, or that this man is impassible, immortal and eternal. Having outlined the communication of property-terms, Henry for the first and only time in this treatise, except for the prologues, employs a prayerful and vocative style. It indicates the awe and mystery that he encounters.³¹

The remaining part of the sixth proposition employs both the distinction between material and formal interpretation of terms (see above) and the theory of reduplication: the repetition in a proposition of the nature signified by the subject-term, f.i. *Christus secundum quod homo est creatura*.

The last feature of Henry's third distinction that I would like to draw attention to is his treatment of the being, the *esse* of Christ. The decisive point of view is taken in the first few lines, that are not easily

accessible. Christ must be called one and not two, and He has also only one being. Even though divine nature is predicated abstractly of the divine supposit which is signified concretely (i.e. *Filius Dei est divina natura*), still human nature is not. For it cannot be said that Christ is humanity. Therefore, Henry says, is Christ one and not more (f. 17 r.). From a correct understanding of how one should speak about Christ incarnate an interpretation is deduced of his being. In other words: a proper interpretation of *est x* yields a proper interpretation of *esse*. It is true to say *Filius Dei est divina natura* and to say *Filius Dei est Deus*. Such a view entails that there is only one divine being, outside of which nothing can be called divine: the doctrine of divine simplicity. It is also true to say *Filius Dei est homo*, but *Filius Dei est humana natura* or *humanitas* is false, since there are also others of whom it is said that they are human. Being two could only apply to Christ according to the natures, but these natures cannot abstractly be predicated. They are predicated concretely (*est Deus, est homo*), signifying the natures as they are in a supposit. Of such a supposit there is only one in Christ, and therefore Christ cannot be called two, and needs his being be one as well. The rule is, Henry says, that one thing has only one absolute being. It is therefore impossible to multiply the personal or hypostatic being as such. The problem that arises concerning a human being that would accompany a fully human nature in Christ, is tackled in the way Aquinas did (cf. *ST* III, 17,2): the being that goes with the human nature is on the one hand not an accidental being, since it would fail to make Christ really human; on the other hand it is not a completely new human personal being, since it would fail to make Christ one; instead it is thought of as a new habit, a new relation, that connects the preexistent personal being with the human nature. It follows that that person now can be said to exist in a human nature, be human as well.³²

Considering Henry's presentation of Aquinas' first part of his *sermo de Christo*, on the conditions of possibility of actual speech about Christ, it may be concluded that in no respect whatsoever Henry innovates or

even improves Aquinas. On the contrary, he stays very close to his hero. The interesting part of his explanation, however, is the way in which he brings out clearly the logical and linguistic underpinnings of Aquinas' treatment.

6. *By way of conclusion: christological regulation*

It may have struck the reader that there is a considerable difference in genre and style between the prologues and the propositions of *De Divinis Nominibus*. The first are meditative, prayerful and addressed, almost mystical in nature. The second are argumentative, didactic and rather detached. Another difference between these two types of texts, closely related to the ones mentioned, is evident as well: when explaining his propositions, Henry almost never quotes from Scripture. It is my interpretation that the rules that he frequently formulates, substitute for quoting from Scripture. The rules, although both philosophical and theological in nature, supplant analysis of concrete use of language in Scripture for didactic purposes. For the same reason almost no Fathers or other authorities are quoted. This crucial aspect of Henry's treatise contributes once again to its preliminary character, i.e. preliminary to the actual *sermo de Christo* of theology. The application of the rules remains confined within the limits of the explanation of the contents of the propositions, which in themselves bear a preliminary character.

Let me return to the first section of this contribution. I mentioned three reasons for which it is worthwhile to study Henry of Gorkum's treatise on the divine names. Henry considers the topic of the divine names to be in the heart of Aquinas' theological authorship. This is important both in historical and systematic respect. The oldest of known commentators guides us in interpreting the work of Aquinas. Moreover, for Henry it is evident that Aquinas' more general analysis of divine names applies to Christ as well. In this respect Henry renders explicit what the *Summa*

Theologiae leaves only implicit. While Aquinas' (and Henry's) *sermo de Christo* is devoted solely to names that are attributed to Christ incarnate, supposing prior treatment of names for the Eternal Son in the course of trinitarian theology, the main emphasis is on (composed) propositions of which *ST* III 16 and 17 are the best examples. But Henry shows excellently why Aquinas can say that qq. 16 and 17 flow forth from a prior understanding of the mode of the hypostatic union: the latter works with a distinction between signification and supposition which guide the explicit analysis of propositions in qq. 16 and 17. This entails a third and last point of interest of Henry's treatise. If Aquinas' general treatise on divine names applies to the *sermo de Christo* as well, then this goes for the negative, apophatic character of Aquinas' general treatise as well. Once again it makes explicit what in the *ST* III remains implicit, and for which one has to adduce e.g. Aquinas' commentary on Isaiah, as was done above, where he quotes Proverbs (30.4): "What is His name, and what is the name of his son, do you know?"

NOTES

1. I would like to thank prof. dr. A.G. Weiler, emeritus professor in Medieval History of the University of Nijmegen and expert on Henry of Gorkum, for his valuable comment on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. *Tractatus de divinis nominibus*, in: *Tractatus consultatorii*, Cologne: H. Quentell, 1503, fol. 1-19r. Cf. A.G. Weiler, *Heinrich von Gorkum* († 1431). *Seine Stellung in der Philosophie und der Theologie des Spätmittelalters*, Hilversum/Einsiedeln etc., 1962, pp. 93/94 and 138-149. Henry's (Heinrich von Gorichem) *Quaestiones in S. Thomam*, was reprinted from a 1473 edition (Esslingen) by Minerva, Frankfurt 1967.
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Isaïam ad litteram*, C. LVI. For the concept of *collatio* cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell and Denise Bouthillier, "Quand Saint Thomas méditait sur le prophète Isaïe", *Revue Thomiste* 90 (1990) 5-47.
4. *Christ the 'Name' of God. Thomas Aquinas on naming Christ*, Publications of the Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, NS, Vol. 1, Louvain: Peeters, 1993.
5. *The Thomist* (59) 1995, 503-506 (Edward L. Krasevac o.p.)
6. M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben. Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*, Bd. II, München, 1936, p. 443; Bd. III, München, 1956, p. 412.
7. "quia ex verbis inordinatis prolatis incurritur heresis", "ideo cum de divinis loquimur cum cautela et modestia est agendum" (f. 1r). The quotation occurs in Aquinas in *In IV Sent.* 13.2.1 obj. 5 and ad 5; *ST* I 31.2 c., I 39.7 obj. 1; III 16.8 c.; and *QD De Potentia* 9.8 c. The contexts in which the quotation functions (faith, Trinity, Christ) reflect in a nutshell the contents of the entire treatise by Henry. The words in fact are not from Jerome, but added to a quotation from Jerome by the author of the *Glossa ordinaria* (in Osee 2,16; *Biblia cum Glossis*, Venetiis, 1588, IV, 336a).
8. "Et quamvis ex lumine rerum creatarum cognitio naturalis multum proficit, tantum ad magis interiora divinitus inspirata sanctorum scientia introducit", f. 5r.
9. Most significant, however, is the absence of anything like such a distinction in Henry's *Quaestiones in S. Thomam*. Moreover, even in the treatise under consideration Henry is not consistent, since he devotes the first proposition of the first distinction ("Ut pie sententiando loquimur recte de divinis, prohibet orthodoxa fides uti quibusdam nominibus") to the names that are to be avoided because of Arianism and Sabellianism, in line with *ST* I 31,2.
10. "Nomen tuum et memoriale tuum domine in desiderio anime mee" [Jes 26,8]. Sicut enim dicit Luce secundo [2,21]: "Vocatum est nomen pueri Jesus." Nomina namque debent proprietatibus rerum respondere, ut habetur quarto Metaphisice [cf. *ST* III, 37,2, c]. Nomina autem que imponuntur divinitus aliquibus semper significant aliquod gratuitum donum eis divinitus datum. Sicut Abrae dictum est: "appellaberis Abraam, quia patrem multarum gentium te constitui." Et dictum est Petro: "Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram edificabo

ecclesiam meam.” Quia igitur homini Christo hoc munus gratiae collatum erat ut per ipsum omnes salvarentur, convenienter vocatum est nomen eius Jesus, idest salvator [cf. *ST* III, 37,2, c], f. 13r.

11. “Et quamvis Christo Deo Sacra Scriptura attribuat varia et plura nomina, in omnibus tamen illis nominibus quodammodo significatur hoc nomen Jesus, quod est significativum salutis. Nam in hoc quod dicitur Emanuel, quod interpretatur nobis Deus, designatur causa salutis que est unio divine nature et humane in persona filii per quam factum est ut Deus esset nobiscum” (f 13r./v.). Henry's use of *ST* III 37,2 ends here. In his *Quaestiones in S. Thomam*, III, q. VII, prop. 2, corollarium 2 Henry also gives a summary of the question at hand. He now adds some other names that Aquinas mentions in ad 1, and also stresses the contents of ad 2: “Hoc autem nomen (...) Jesus secundum perfectam rationem dicte proprietatis nemini ante Christum conveniebat”.

12. “O Iesu salvator seculi multa nobis nomina attulit sancta tua incarnatio et philosophiam omni admiratione dignam et priscis seculis philosophorum inauditam, quorum studio hec tertia pars presentis opusculi insistens proferet propositiones artem continentes fideliter enunciandi sermonem vigore incarnationis emergentem eo ductore previo cui dicendum est sincera devotione: “Domine nomen tuum et memoriale tuum in desiderio anime mee”, f. 13v.

13. Weiler (o.c. p. 144) considers this to be a silent critique of the position of Duns Scotus and his *distinctio formalis*. It evidently is a personal addition to the contents of q. 13 by Henry himself.

14. Cf. *ST* III 2.7, 16.6 and 35.5.

15. Cf. the text explaining prop. 12 in distinction 3: “Quia Verbum Divinum habet generationem eternam a Deo Patre, et aliam temporalem a virgine matre, sed quia subiectum filiationis non est natura aut pars nature, sed solum persona vel hypostasis, in Christo autem est una tantum hypostasis eterna [*ST* III, 35,5] in qua subiective non potest esse aliqua relatio temporalis, hinc est quod in eo non est nisi una filiatio, scilicet eterna, secundum quam dicitur Filius Dei Patris. Dicitur tamen vere et realiter filius virginis matris propter realem relationem que est in matre, cui in Christo cointelligitur relatio rationis, sicut antea in similibus est prehabitu.”

16. “quod divinas perfectiones balbutiendo resonamus”, *Moralia* 5,36; cf. *ST* I 4.1 ad 1.

17. Cf. Michael B. Ewbank, “Diverse orderings of Dionysius's *triplex via* by St. Thomas Aquinas”, *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990) 82-109.

18. The order is as follows: the hypostatic union (1-3), the grace and knowledge of Christ (4-5), the *communicatio idiomatum* in speaking about Christ (6), the being of Christ (7), the will and operations (8), prayer and priesthood (9), predestination and adoration (10), mediator and son of his virgin mother (11), nativities (12), and sorrow and joy on the cross (13). One easily recognizes the original order of treatment in *ST* III.

19. "Modum unionis verbi incarnati sane precognoscere, pulcherrimum est prohemium loquendi recte de divina incarnatione", f. 13v.
20. Prop. 12 en 13 correspond with *ST* III 35.5 and 46.7-8, but materially 12 is a corollary of *ST* I 13.7, as is explained above (names implying a relation), and 13 of *ST* III 15. Henry's treatment is very short and he rashly refers to what was already treated before.
21. "a tali cognitione dependet tota ars discernendi inter sermones convenientes et disconvenientes circa mysterium incarnationis dum pretendimus Deo attribuire propositiones vi incarnationis noviter emergentes", f. 13v.
22. "Ex quibus potest sollers lector perpendere quos sermones catholicos debeat proferre, scilicet consurgentes ratione incarnationis salutifere, quod fuit tertium peragendam in hac compilatione", f. 18 v.
23. "propositiones artem continentes fideliter enunciandi sermonem vigore incarnationis emergentem", f. 13 v.
24. 'To interpret' should also be taken literally: "Unde iuxta hoc potest prudens interpres rectificare sermonem loquendi circa predicta a Verbo Dei assumpta", f. 15v.
25. "Constat autem quod si unio esset facta secundum alium modum necesse esset formare alias loquutiones", f. 13v.
26. "...non erit difficile intelligere et formare plurimas enunciationes de Christo catholicas omnino insolitas quoad alios homines, ut habere animam beatam in corpore passibili, et eandem potentiam anime esse simul in summa leticia et extrema tristitia et sic de similibus secundum statum illius unionis anime cum corpore in Christo et inferiorum virium ad superiores aut portionis inferioris ad superiorem et ulterius ad unionem hypostaticam in quantum inferiora ad illam unionem reducuntur per sua superiora", f. 16r.
27. *Communicatio idiomatum* or exchange of property-terms is possible in *christologicis* because of the personal union of both natures in Christ. Thus it is true to say that 'This man (Christ) is omnipotent', as well as 'The Son of God is suffering'.
28. "Nam regula est quod nomen significans naturam communem in concreto potest supponere pro quolibet contentorum in natura communi", f. 16r.
29. "Secunda regula est quod de quolibet supposito alicuius nature potest vere et proprie predicari nomen significans illam naturam in concreto", f. 16r.
30. The expression *in materia naturalis* can be read as 'necessarily'. Cf. the anonymous *De Totius Logicae Aristotelicae Summa*, tr. 6, c. 10 (contained in the Parma-edition and the Busa-edition of the works of Thomas Aquinas).
31. "O pie Iesu quam recte dixisti ore: "Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me" [Ps 138,6], quia almiflua tua incarnatione priorum phylosophorum scientia obstupuit audiens veritates ante insolitas ut quod immortale est mortale, eternum est temporale, omnipotens est

infirmus, superdives est egenus, immensum est in virginis utero clausum, Virgo peperit, Deus esurit etc.", f. 16v. The rule that he formulates, silently quoted from *ST III*, 16, 4, seems incomprehensible without the latter's context. Aquinas stresses that it is forbidden to reserve the human predicates for *Christus homo* and the divine predicates for *Christus Deus*, even though one has to distinguish between the different meanings of the predicates. All predicates are truthfully said of *Christus homo* as well as of *Christus Deus*: "Regula tamen est notanda qua dicitur quod "in propositione in qua aliquid de aliquo predicatur, non solum attenditur quid sit illud" quod predicatur et "de quo predicatur, sed etiam secundum quid". Unde de eodum supposito et subiecto predicantur in concreto ea quae sunt nature divine, et ea quae sunt nature assumpte. Sed tamen dicuntur [distinguuntur - HS] ea secundum quam predicantur predicata", f. 16v.

32. "Quia vero regula est, quod unius rei est tantum unum esse simpliciter. Hinc est quod impossibile est multiplicari illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam personam aut hypostasim secundum se. Et quia in Christo est tantum una hypostasis cui natura humana coniungitur hypostatice et non accidentaliter, hinc est quod Christo secundum humanam naturam non advenit novum esse personale, sed solum nova habitudo esse personalis preexistentis ad naturam humanam, ut scilicet illa persona iam dicatur subsistere, non solum secundum naturam divinam, sed etiam humanam. Sicut si post constitutionem persone fortis advenirent forti pedes, manus vel oculi, non adveniret forti aliud esse sed solum quaedam relatio ad huiusmodi", f. 17r.